

## EARLY CHILDHOOD ORGANISATION

President's Report  
Annual General Meeting  
14<sup>th</sup> November, 2009.  
Held at  
The Education Development Centre, Hindmarsh.

The year's business commenced on an auspicious note with the induction of three new members, Danielle Gibson, Sally Gower and Ann Muckersie to the Early Childhood Organisation's Planning Committee. Thereafter, our initial conference visited the theme *Young Children's Powerful Mathematical Ideas* delivered by Dr Bob Perry of Charles Sturt University. Bob spoke about analysis of children's powerful mathematical ideas which have led to the development of the Numeracy Matrix that encourages educators to plan, implement and assess their mathematical practices. The extraordinary response to the early advertising for this conference created a predicament: registrations closed at 124 with an additional 129 on the waiting list. This presented a dilemma for the Planning Committee as the three conferences scheduled for 2009 were confirmed. The possibility of re-presenting the conference was discussed in depth, yet I was mindful of the additional pressure this would exert on committee members; it must be appreciated, that those individuals have family commitments, many work full-time and volunteer a considerable portion of their spare time to the organisation of professional conferences for their colleagues. Following upon protracted discussion therefore, it was resolved we will attempt to stage a repeat of the Maths conference in 2010.

Second Term saw a focus on the Arts and, unlike previous EChO conferences, this one began with a unique presentation by Stargold Puppets. Following a truly mesmerising performance, Luci Simmons and William Keyte demonstrated some intriguing production techniques and puppet creations. The audience feedback clamoured 'encore'!!! Thus, in our 2009 finale programme, the committee has engaged Stargold Puppets for a one hour workshop.

Third term conference was led by DECS' Policy and Program Officer in Healthy Weight, Penny Kazimierczak. Penny addressed the theme *Getting Fit Together – What's at Stake Here?* We were disturbed to learn that Australia rates fourth in the world on levels of obesity: in 2004 2.5 million adults were considered obese; 4.5 million were considered overweight - more than half the adult population. This conference was dissimilar from others in that it focused on the health and well-being of teachers and students alike and so participants were availed sessions that addressed teachers' well-being through Pilates and Yoga. Disappointingly, the programme was curtailed when a sudden torrential deluge short-circuited the fire alarm system and forced the evacuation of the EDC premises. The interruption rendered EChO incapable of thanking its presenters in the customary manner and we received scant feedback on the day's events. We ought not be too disappointed though, because it was the first such occurrence after years of exemplary service from EDC, it caused a bit of excitement and, as

we awaited the fire brigade's 'all clear', presented an opportunity for us to mingle with people we had otherwise not seen at the conference,

Our Fourth term conference has resulted in some of the exceptional presenters we have engaged in recent years to address participants who may have missed the opportunity to hear them.

EChO continues to be represented on a variety of committees including: the Early Years Stake Holders, and the Australian Early Years Development Index. EChO also provided feedback to the National Curriculum Draft Papers in English.

Membership continues to increase: 2009 – 170, 2008 – 127, 2007 – 139, 2006 – 110.

On a more general note, 2009 has been a difficult year for EChO. The normal stresses that daily life delivers has tested many committee members, whether through ill health, bereavement or sundry family matters, each has exacted a toll on our committee. I have been heartened in such times, at the willing acceptance of the additional burden that the temporary reallocation of responsibilities brought. Indeed, I hope the personal support amongst each other has steeled us to hang in and stay with the committee. Personal issues notwithstanding, the most perplexing challenge facing our organisation is the increased cost of staging our product. I am amazed at the cost escalation in this past year alone. At a recent meeting for example, I drew attention to the price increase of six regular items over twelve months; from \$146 in 2008 to \$406 in 2009. Consequently, we will be compelled to revise our membership fees and registration fees upward in 2010. Price rates for EChO conferences and membership have been the same for the past six years.

Finally, I would like to thank all the presenters who willingly volunteer their time to present on our behalf. There are a number of unheralded individuals and organisations who also contribute from behind the scenes in support of EChO and so are equally deserving of our thanks and appreciation. I would like to thank our resilient caterer, Max Rattley, for his superb service and continued support over many years, Glen Hollis of *Book Distributors* who has continually supported EChO participants with generous price reductions, the Council of Education Associations of South Australia for their clerical support, the forever obliging Education Development Centre personnel, our volunteer Committee Members: Margaret Dell, Deb Duckmanton, Daniella Gibson, Janet Gifford, Sally Gower, Ann Muckersie, Mary Stacey, Marilyn Zulian, Vice Presidents: Sharon Arney, Andrea Bowen, Sue Close, Secretary: Suzanne Dunn and Treasurer: Aggie Marziale; my heartfelt appreciation and sincere thanks to one and all.

Heather Lawes.